

Remarks by Mayor Paul D. Fraim
Norfolk Project Homeless Connect
Wednesday, May 15, 2013
Norfolk Scope
8:00 am

Good morning and thank you all for coming out to participate in the City of Norfolk's fourteenth Project Homeless Connect.

Welcome to those of you volunteering for the first time, and welcome back to all of you who are returning as veteran Project Homeless Connect volunteers.

I want to recognize several volunteers here today who were themselves formerly homeless. You are some of our most courageous and admirable citizens. The compassion you show in continuing to help the less fortunate after fighting to end your own homelessness exemplifies the level of trust and respect for the work that each and every one of you do. You are an inspiration to all of us.

I would be remiss if I did not mention that our homeless community lost one of its most dedicated service professionals in January, Clara Smith. Ending homelessness in Norfolk was not only a job for Clara, it was her life's work. Clara worked for the Union Mission, Virginia Supportive Housing, Saint Columba and the Norfolk Department of Human Services. She was instrumental in defining the ethic and culture of the homeless service system in our community. Known by many names by our guests – friend, confidant, caregiver and advocate - Clara was committed to ensuring that the basic needs of all people in this city were met. My Clara's spirit envelope your duties and activities today as we work together to address the needs of Norfolk's most vulnerable citizens.

This morning, more than 600 volunteers and service providers will deliver goods, services, and hope to over 500 of our guests. This is an extraordinary effort that produces tangible results. Norfolk Project Homeless Connect continues to be a success because of staff and hundreds of volunteers who give their time to lend a helping hand to our homeless neighbors.

Since our last event in October, I am happy to report that Heron's Landing, our region's newest permanent supportive housing development, opened in March in Chesapeake. Norfolk will house 6 of its formerly homeless citizens in Heron's Landing. The City continues to work to identify a site for our next supportive housing development to help those in need.

This year we welcome Capital One as a full community sponsor. Capital One is devoted to contributing to the communities where their customers and associates live, work, and do business. In addition to Capital One, this event is supported by The Dalis Foundation, the United Way of South Hampton Roads and Jason's Deli. Project Homeless Connect would not be possible without these and other community and faith sponsorships.

As you go throughout your day, know that you are helping our neighbors help themselves. Your service is giving them something that money cannot buy, today you are providing them with hope. Our mission today – Housing, Healthcare, Hope – is fitting. Without hope, our neighbors will never realize the dream of having a safe and healthy home to call their own.

Ladies and gentlemen, let's get started with providing hope because everyone deserves a home and the opportunity for a healthy life.

Thank you for service here today.